

CALLS ADDRESSED TO THE INSTITUTE AND THE RESPONSE OF THE BROTHERS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

(From the review «Comunicação»
of the District of Porto Alegre, N° 100)

Many are the calls made to us today by the Church. The "urgent calls" vary according to the point of view which they reflect. We are referring to the important calls from the Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Church.

1. The call for the evangelization of nations.

The call made by Vatican II:

a/ Necessity for evangelization:

– for the unbelievers: «But they will not ask his help unless they believe in him, and they will not believe in him unless they have heard of him and they will not hear of him unless they get a preacher, and they will never have a preacher unless one is sent» (Rom 10: 14-15).

– believers must continually hear about faith and repentance; they must be prepared for the sacraments; they must be taught how to fulfill all that Christ commands» (SC n. 9)

b/ Evangelization must reach everyone.

«Since the local Church must mirror the universal Church as far as it is able, it must have a keen realization that it, too, has been sent to those who do not believe in Christ and who dwell in the same region, to guide them to Christ through the witness of the lives of each of the faithful as well as that of the entire community» (AG 20).

c/ The apostolate of the laity is the only way to reach many people:

«...The laity are perfectly capable of exercising their apostolate with their peers. They complete the witness of their lives by the witness of their word. In the area of labor, professions, studies, living, leisure or social life the laity have the opportunity to help their brothers... This apostolate must be extended to all the people they contact and it must include any spiritual or material assistance they can offer them... Many cannot hear the Gospel or know Christ except through the laity, their neighbors» (AA. N° 133).

d/ A call repeated in Puebla (N° 777, 778, 800) and in Evangelii Nuntiandi (N° 68, 69, 70).

2. A call for the involvement of the laity.

In these two documents, the Dogmatic Constitution Lumen Gentium, Ch IV, and in the decree Apostolicam Actuositatem, Vatican II speaks of the apostolate of the

laity. See also the orientations and insistence of John XXIII and Paul VI on what concerns the opening up of the "Ministries".

3. A call for respect and development of the human person.

In its pastoral Constitution Gaudium et Spes, Vatican II speaks of this call: respect for the human person (N° 27); the equality of all men (N° 29); the value of human activity (N° 34); the defense, promotion and protection of the family (N° 47, 48, 49, 52).

4. The call to social justice and the development of peoples.

Vatican II speaks about this in chapter III of the pastoral Constitution Gaudium et Spes when it deals with the Church in the modern world.

The encyclicals Mater et magistra and Populorum Progressio recall and bring up to date the social doctrine of the Church. The encyclical Sollicitudo rei Socialis of John Paul II is the latest word on the subject.

5. A call to openness and docility to the Holy Spirit.

a/ An intense and continual life of prayer.

b/ prayer centers, prayer encounters, prayer retreats.

c/ Writings on the Holy Spirit and prayer...

d/ The encyclical of John Paul II "Dominum et Vivificantem" on the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church and the world.

(5/18/1986).

The Response of the Brothers of the Christian Schools to the call of the Church Today.

The Brothers of the Christian Schools are a Congregation of Brothers, lay Religious, founded by St. John Baptist de La Salle for the Christian education of youth, especially the poor. This purpose which is still valid today, determines the manner in which the Congregation responds to some aspects of those calls from the Church of today.

1. With regard to the call to Evangelization, there is a concerted effort that in our schools:

– there will be a truly Christian atmosphere.

– catechesis be active, youth groups encouraged, leaders be formed, workshops be organized, Eucharistic celebrations be held in honor, and active participation in the life of the parish be advocated.

– Service for Religious Education (SER) give orientations and supervise Religion teachers as well as stimulate and promote Christian living.

– besides the weekly catechesis, there will be a daily "Reflection to raise consciousness of Gospel values" based on some significant Christian idea taken from the Agenda which has been given to the students.

– Our District has a Central Catechetical Team which evaluates schools, supports teachers, especially the catechists, by providing them with all manner of catechetical materials.

– The Brother of the Christian Schools is aware that he is not only a professional, but a man sent by God, by Christ and

by the Church to teach the Gospel to youth (GE 2).

– He offers his students a mature love which unites firm guidance with the requirements of affection and respect as would be expected in one who is called to union with God (GE 9).

2. With regard to the promotion of the Laity, it has mounted a serious effort to develop excellence in the teachers who work in our schools:

- Delegation of responsibilities among the teachers of our schools according to the principle "awareness, freedom and participation".
- Formation of catechists.
- Development of Parent-Teachers associations, and encourage their participation in the school.
- Encouraging the creation of educational communities through co-responsibility among Brothers, teachers, parents and alumni.

3. With regard to human development:

- development of the person, development of the mind.
- an atmosphere of respect and dialog between teachers and students.
- social integration: presence of rich and poor, white and black...
- an effort to know each student individually, the reality with which he lives, awareness of his capabilities.

4. With regard to justice and the development of peoples.

- The school as agent for the development of peoples (R 13a).
- «Through the promotion of justice and peace they cooperate in the building up of the kingdom of God» (R 7).
- «The Brothers are entrusted with their mission by the Institute, a mission especially to the poor. As a community they become increasingly conscious of the reasons for the poverty that surrounds them and so become earnestly involved in the promotion of justice and human dignity through the educational service they provide» (R 14).
- The Brothers have always in view the promotion of justice in the light of the gospel and either the direct or indirect service of the poor as the preferred aspect of their ministry of education.» (R 40)
- «With regard to its employees and auxiliary personnel, the community observes both the obligations of social justice and the demands of Christian charity» (R 60c).
- «In conformity with the spirit of the Institute, the Brothers cooperate closely with those in the Church or in society who are involved in education, ministry to the young, the cultivation of a sense of justice, the use of mass media, or the integration of young people into social and professional life» (R 17d).
- «The Brother Visitor ensures that the requirements of canon law and civil law are complied with in what concerns the goods of the District and the patrimonial goods of the Brothers. The same applies to social justice as it affects the personnel employed by the communities» (R 132d).
- «Educational Foundation La Salle: This is destined to help maintain works for the poor, poor students in the schools, and to the perpetuation of the Fund itself» (District Chapter V, N° 51).

– «To send as least 10% of the Brothers to the Missions after providing for their adequate preparation» (District Chapter V, N° 55).

– «To participate... by joining in on various projects and in the missionary effort of the Institute, as well as by contributing to the Sharing Fund» (District Chapter v, n° 54-54B).

5. With regard to openness and docility to the action of the Holy Spirit and prayer:

– «The Brothers provide opportunities for their students to encounter God more frequently» (R 15a).

– «Pray the Master of the harvest to send workers into his vineyard» invite the Brothers to realize that prayer is fundamental in order to initiate and to develop a pastoral ministry for vocation. (R 84).

– «The Founder gives this recommendation "Ask God that he will be pleased to make your Institute grow and bear fruit day by day". This stimulates the Brothers to organize prayers for vocations in their communities...» (R 84).

– «prayer, filial devotion to St. John Baptist de La Salle, love for the community and dedication to the work of the apostolate help to assure stability and fidelity to the Institute» (R 42b).

– «The oratory where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved provides the ideal setting for community prayer.» (R 70b).

– «Each Brother has the primary responsibility for his personal prayer. Each one and all together are jointly responsible for community prayer» (R 72).

– «Ordinarily the Brothers give to God at least two hours of each day in meditation, the Eucharist, community vocal prayer, spiritual reading and personal prayer» (R 73).

– «The fidelity of the Brothers is achieved by their daily response to different situations, by getting to know more fully persons and the milieu in which they live and work, and by their determination to find new strength in frequent prayer» (R 145).

– «The Brothers are faithful to their mission in the measure in which they perceive and accept the calls which come to them from their ministry, and in which they go to God as apostles who are responsible for the salvation of those confided to them» (Dist. Ch. V, 14).

– «It is our duty to re-establish this charism in all its purity with the adaptations which are necessary for our times and then to transmit its renewed form to new generations» (Dist. Ch. V, 15).

– «We will be men of God through the renewal of our spirituality:

– Know, assimilate and live the Rule.

– Renew the practice of meditation.

– Design and accept the Personal Program» (Dist. Ch. V, 17).

– Besides their annual retreat, the Brothers follow specific courses for their continued formation: CIL, CREL, Más Vida, Año de Renovación, formation programs organized by the local Church or other entities such as CERNE, CETESP, etc, the CNBB or CRB.

«That through our lives together as Brothers, we show the unity with which we pursue our common goal and celebrate it as a Community in the liturgy, especially on the occasion of important dates designated by the Church and the Institute» (Dist. Ch. V, N° 4).

Brother Estevão Turcatel